



Statement by Mrs. Ruchi Ghanashyam, Minister, on Agenda Item 13: UNFPA: Annual Report of the Executive Director for 2003 at Annual Session 2004 of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA (Geneva: June 14-23, 2004) on June 21, 2004

Mr. President,

We thank the Executive Director for her informative and detailed report as also her inspiring presentation of this morning. We are impressed with the professional manner and easy to read format in which the annual report has been presented.

Mr. President,

We are happy to note from the report that the growing support for UNFPA is also reflected in its expanding donor base. We are also satisfied that the Fund's regular income in 2003 showed an increase of 12.7% over the 2002 income. However, the Programme expenditure in 2003 was lower than in 2002, which is disappointing. The report indicates UNFPA's attempt to fulfil the critical need of expanding its donor base to achieve financial stability for which it has stepped up advocacy efforts to attract larger contributions from major donor countries of the OECD. As we are all aware, core or regular resources constitute the mainstay of country programmes. We feel that the Fund must focus on larger commitments to the core resources.

We notice the importance being attached to the simplification and harmonization of programmes and operational procedures. We agree with Madam Obaid that the purpose of simplification and harmonisation of procedures should be to reduce the burden on developing countries and to reduce transaction costs. However, to the extent possible, harmonisation should be with the practices and procedures of the recipient country. We would view with disfavour, any harmonisation with donors which has the effect of introducing implicit conditionalities. Similarly, in the process of joint programming, it needs to be ensured that donor driven priorities do not overshadow the needs of the recipient countries. It is our understanding, in general, that strengthened partnerships mean greater coordination at the field level, under the leadership of national governments and in support of national priorities.

Mr. President,

We agree with Madam Obaid that cultural sensitivity in designing programs leads to higher levels of program acceptance and ownership by the community and program sustainability. This further highlights that strong national ownership and involvement are important for the successful implementation of programmes.

My delegation would like to appreciate UNFPA's efforts to develop "Country Commodity Manager" software, making commodity swaps possible. However, we have also noted that the decreased donor support for commodities of late, notwithstanding growing demand, poses a major challenge. We would like to encourage UNFPA to adopt a proactive approach in enhancing the capacities of production of reproductive health commodities in developing countries. UNFPA is already sourcing some contraceptives from India. Such cooperation with developing countries can be enhanced and encouraged.

Mr. President,

We have taken note of the Fund's efforts to institutionalise results based management and to link results with resources through the use of ATLAS. We have also noted that in the area of monitoring and evaluation, challenges are posed by factors such as incomplete baseline data, unrealistic indicators, inadequate program data, insufficient human and financial resources, and limited staff capacity and experience in results-based management. We, therefore, recommend a cautious and judicious approach in this regard. The imposition of a mechanically-driven results-based approach runs the risk of distorting the priorities of the Fund.

This year we observe ten years of ICPD. It is heartening that in a series of events in the recent past the global community has reiterated its commitment to the ICPD agenda. India has played a key role in regional and international fora to further this commitment. Mr. President, I am happy to inform the members of the Board that the first-ever meeting of the Health Ministers of SAARC countries held late last year in New Delhi reiterated this commitment unequivocally.

Before I conclude, a word about population. Our National Population Policy highlights population stabilisation as a key objective to be achieved at a level consistent with social development, environmental protection, and sustainable economic growth. Population stabilisation is a key concern for my government. Of course, our efforts in this regard are gender-sensitive and follow a rights-based approach, in accordance with the ICPD agenda.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)